2: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Kerry

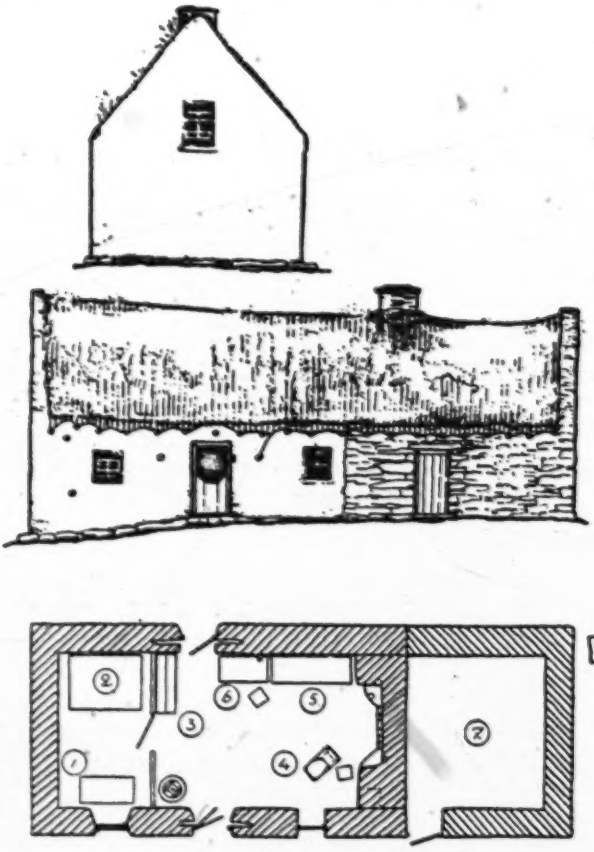

Fig. 4. Gable-chimney house. Cilrialaig, Co. Kerry. The cattle once in the lower end of the house. Now removed to a house added to the upper gable wall. 1 table, 2 bed, 3 dresser, 4 cradle, 5 bench, 6 table, 7 sowhouse.

[231]

fig. 4. In Co. Kerry, Co. Galway and other parts of Ireland, I have been told [171] of rough strong doors of wattles bound together with ropes of *sugán*. Such a door, the hurdle door, *sgálán fraoigh* or *scalpán*, was more commonly used as a door for cattle sheds. It is found also in Scotland (see e. g. an illustration showing sheilings in Jura (S. W. Scotland) in Pinkertons Voyages and Travels, vol. III, p. 278, London 1809) and it is mentioned in the Ancient Irish laws. About the two opposite doors and the half-doors see p. 217.

In older times a hole in the wall, a looplight, served as window. It was closed [284, 414] at night with a hay-wisp or a wooden shutter, *cómhla*, which was removed by day and secured at night by a stick placed across or by a latch.

2: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 trimming the thatch. When using the *sugán* or hay-rope method the straw, bound in large bunches, is placed on the roof in rows, each 'set' about 18" wide. The thatcher beginning from below takes a handful of straw and puts the top part of the straw against the roof. He then puts another handful slightly above the last, so that the handfuls lie on top of each other. The bottom part of the handful is spread and flattened out with hands. Then the ropes are put on. A man stays on a ladder at each gable of the house, pl. XLVI: 1. Another man carries the rope along the roof by means of a hay-fork while another walks beside him loosening the ball of ropes. The first rope is put on along the eave, the next above until the top of the house is reached. The ropes are fastened along the gables by means of stone plugs. Then the vertical ropes are put on, and fixed to the front and back walls of the house, also by stone plugs. The two systems of ropes can also be intertwined with each other, so that the ropes form a kind of unintentional ornamentation. Other means of fastening the ropes are by weighting the vertical ropes with stones attached to the ends. The stones are placed in two different ways, (1) hanging below the eave of the house, this is the most primitive way, (2) laying the stones on the roof just above the eave to press down the thatch at the same time as they hold the ropes. The rows of stones when finally laid give a good finish. This is also an example of unintentional ornamentation. It is worth noticing that the hay cocks too may be fastened in nearly the same three ways by means of hay ropes.

342 284

342 In order to produce hay-ropes used for binding the thatch and the hay cocks etc. a multitude of simple tools has been invented, pl. XLVII: 2.

To sum up some conclusions about thatching and roof, it seems clear to me that two, perhaps related, but nevertheless unlike traditions have been at work here, namely the scollop thatching, with the highly elevated roof resting on couples that meet each other, on the one hand, and on the other hand hay rope thatching, with the hay ropes fastened to stones, and often a low roof without perceptible ridge resting on a couple construction, where the couples do not join. Parallels to the former tradition are to be found on the European continent and the latter are mainly found, as far as I know, along the coast of the Atlantic and the North Sea.

I must add that the well-built thatched roof is at the same time a masterpiece of technical ability and a feat of artistic skill. The best Irish thatching give the finest peasant roof in Europe. It is unfortunately, however, very expensive and demands constant attention to keep it in good repair so it is very often replaced by a cheap, shoddy roof of foreign origin.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

248
[246]
[284]

Fig. 51.

or " swapped " between neighbouring farms, and a day of flax-pulling traditionally ended with dancing. The flax is harvested in August, after the fleeting pale blue flower has gone. Prepared beforehand and lying ready to hand in bundles of 60 or so (enough for a certain number of stooks) are the lint bands of green rushes for tying the sheaves or " beets." The bands consist of two lengths of rushes, placed with the flowering ends together and tied in a reef-knot with a single movement involving a quick manipulation of thumbs and fingers (Fig. 52). The beets are stooked heads down, in which position also they are drowned or " dubbed," as soon as may be, in the " lint hole " or flax dam, where soft water has been warming up ready for the steeping. A horizontal layer of beets and a covering of bracken weighted with large stones completes the filling of the dam, and the process of retting, which takes on the average 10 or 12 days, is soon advertized by a smell of foul yet fascinating intensity. We need not follow the flax on its career from the rank pit to

Fig. 52.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

These two-eared spades are always attached to the haft by means of straps about 6 inches long, generally with two rivets: the foot-plates are fastened to the blade by mortice and tenon and to the handle by a drawn-down tongue bent up and nailed between the straps (Fig. 62). A visit to one of the 9 or 10 Irish spade "factories"—there were many more a few decades ago—provides a thrilling illustration of craftsmanship and co-ordination of labour. The five hundredweight tilt-hammer, driven by a water wheel, beats out the red steel in a series of operations under the skilled hand and eye of the spade-maker: between each process the steel must be re-heated, and the interchange of the "moulds" and "plates" between furnace-man and hammer-man goes on without pause, for the "bit" of the hammer must not be allowed to strike without having the hot metal ready on the anvil. In addition to supplying his mate, the furnace-man has to bend over the "fullered mould" and weld and shape it on a small anvil: he must also apply sand and water to the plates if they get overheated, and dip the folded end in dust so that the two straps do not weld together under the hammer. After a period of ceaseless labour and watchfulness a pile of blue-grey drawn plates, their hammer grooves throwing back the glow of the furnace, lies ready for the finishing smith.

He shears them to the desired dimensions—all the measuring is done by eye although there are dozens of different sizes—cuts out the tenons and punches the rivet holes. The points of the straps separate when the ends are clipped, and the socket is now opened up and shaped on a mandrel. Then comes the finishing: the plate is heated once more, hammered into the correct lift and dish, and tempered. Meanwhile lengths of rivets have been cut and the foot-plates drawn down: the ash handle is inserted and riveted, the straps hammered tight against the wood and the foot-plates morticed and nailed on. Four generations of experience lay behind the smith whom I watched recently in a Co. Antrim spade factory; the result was a product of exquisite proportions and economy of structure, the essentials of the country craft.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

281 across, are commonly arranged in patterns having, for example,
415 the maker's initials and the date left unpierced. A deeper tray used for carrying corn or for fruit-picking is known as a "dallan." Then there is the meal sieve, which has fine perforations, for sifting the coarse skins (meal seeds) from the oatmeal. Similar to this is the buttermilk sieve with which,
285 before the adoption of the hair sieve, the small particles of
415 butter were strained from the buttermilk. A milk-strainer made of birch bark folded into a cone and filled with straw is referred to in a 17th century account quoted by Mr. E. MacLysaght. In Tory, according to Mr. T. Mason, the wight is "composed simply of sheepskin with a twisted straw rope forming the rim."

The corn sieve, for getting out dust and dirt, and the corn riddle (Fig. 71), for separating bits of straw and "hairy

[281]

Fig. 71.

tails," consist of interwoven splits of ash or bog-fir attached to a rim of the same material. The only difference between them is that the mesh of the former is one-eighth of an inch, of the latter perhaps ¼ inch, though it may vary for different kinds of grain. Efficient riddling is a difficult and nowadays rather rare art. I have not come across sieves of rushes or split willow, but it is very likely that they may be found.

243 The corn riddle and the winnowing tray lead us back to
412 the thrashing floor in the barn. Here we will probably see a flail hanging on the wall. The sound of the flail is by no means rare in Ireland, for in outlying districts the small farmer has no other means of thrashing. The three parts of the flail are the helve or "hand-stave," a straight stick of any light wood such as ash or larch, the shorter and heavier swingel or beater, called in Ireland the "souple" (generally made of hazel, occasionally of holly or birch) and the flail-joint, hanging or
[284] "mid-kipple," which may be a sheep- or goat-skin thong, a

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

 243 412

length of flax, or an eel skin. The methods of attaching the hanging to the hand-stave and souple vary, as will be seen from a random selection of drawings (Fig. 72). The joint [284]

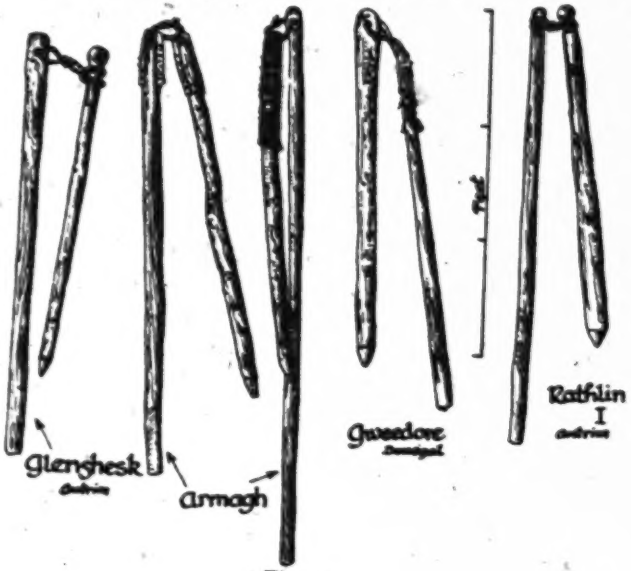

Fig. 72.

shown in the Armagh flail (left), resembles a common English style, but it occurs as far west as Galway. Varied too, are the proportions between the component parts and the methods of swinging the flail. Thus in Antrim the souple is flung round the head while in Donegal it is kept to the side of the body. On fine days the thrashing may take place out of doors, but the usual place is " between doors " in the barn or even in the kitchen, for the opposite doors create a draught which carries away the dust. A besom of heather or of dried kale flower-stalks keeps the barn floor clean. [824]

One of the most interesting and varied and probably one of the oldest crafts practised by countryfolk is the making of 285

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Fig. 80.

Fig. 81.

rectangular examples containing four nest-holes in two storeys are found in some districts, for example in Co. Longford. Though not easy to describe, the construction is quite simple once a start has been made. The finished objects have the appearance of being coiled. While some may have been made in this way, any that I have examined or watched under construction are plaited. The first stage is to twist a long sugán and double it into a two-ply rope, inserting between each third twist a small handful of straw known as a "tate." For the second row the tates are folded forward and plaited, the third rope being provided by the combined ends of the last tate. Handfuls of straw are inserted at regular intervals during the process, and the plaiting goes on until the desired shape and size are reached. The effect is shown in the hen-nest (Fig. 79). Straw collars for horses are made in a different way: some consist of two-ply ropes sown together with twine, but the type used with the Glens' slide-car is simpler (Plate IV).

Ropes of many kinds were in steady demand for tethering and spancelling, and it was the custom to prepare a good supply during the winter. Rushes were also used for the purpose, and they still meet a number of other needs such as bedding, thatching and flax-tying, apart from their old uses for toys, baskets, floor beds, rushlights and the ceremonial crosses to be discussed in Chapter 17. For making ropes the rushes were cut in late summer and beetled with a maul (or "mell"), then broken and twisted by hand so as to get rid of the pith. Dried in the sun and tied in bundles, they were stored until the dark days of winter, when they were fashioned into burden ropes and binnen-ropes (Chapters 9 & 12). The rushes were twisted by hand, first as single ropes, then in two ply: finally an eye was made at one end, and this end was strengthened by threading through another length of rope so as to make a plait. Spancels of rush rope were used to tie together the front legs of kicking cows, and horses were prevented from straying at nights by similar treatment. "Langles" and "burochs," tying together the side and the hind legs respectively, were other methods of hobbling. Straw ropes were commonly employed instead of rush ropes for hobbling,

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

and similarly the cattle were fastened in the byre by ropes of straw, as in Clare, or of horse-hair, as in Kerry. Of the two burden ropes illustrated (Figs. 80, 81) the Donegal example is a two-ply rush rope with an eye made of a peeled stick bent into a loop: the Aran specimen is of grass (Manilla) rope passing through a hole in a wooden runner. Similar blocks of wood serve as a swivel to prevent kinks in tethering ropes, separate lengths of rope passing through each hole.

Reference has been made to the fir-ropes used in securing roofing scraws and thatch. Thin splits of straight-grained bog-fir about four feet long and an inch wide are twisted by hand into hollow cylinders, joined end to end to make a coil of about 50 feet. Two or three of these are twisted together to give the finished product, which combines great strength and elasticity with the capacity to stand up to all weathers. Fir-rope was often stretched across the wooden bed-frame to make a springy mattress. A short " tie " of fir-rope is shown in Fig. 21, p. 63.

[p. 132 is blank]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

226 227 are said to last a lifetime. I have seen such lines twisted between the palms of the hand and also made by spinning round a cap to which the two loose ends are pinned. In County Galway similar foot-lines are made of mixed horse and

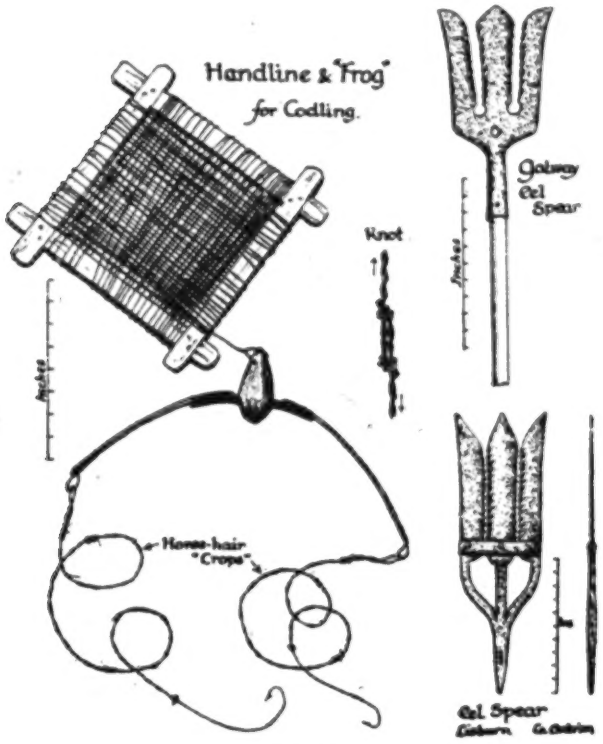

Fig. 94.

[2847] [827] cow hair. The short lengths of hair cord are tied with a special knot (Fig. 94) which is " set " with saliva. Horse-hair cords were formerly used to fasten together the curragh framework in Donegal.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

homespun, buttoned up the back, and reaching well below the knees, until they reach the age of ten or eleven years. The dyes for the homespuns are obtained from plants growing on the islands; the orange used for stockings being got from a lichen (*Ramalina scopulorum*); black and brown from the purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*); blue from a small cruciferous plant; and red usually from imported madder, but sometimes from water-lily roots. Alum is used as mordant.

5. *Dwellings.*—A house consists of a kitchen, and one or two bedrooms; and it is, as a rule, built of dry stones without any mortar, though this is used afterwards for stopping chinks, and plastering the walls internally. Most of the houses are not whitewashed, with the exception of a belt around the small windows, but lime-washed houses are becoming more common than formerly. The house has two doors, front and back, both opening directly into the kitchen; and the windows are situated only on the front of the house; they are of very small size, and seldom made to open; yet, often, small as they are, they are nearly filled up, so as to leave only from six inches to a foot square of glazed surface. The chimneys and fireplaces are of the usual type found throughout the rural districts of Ireland, except that in some cases the chimney, after rising perpendicularly nearly to the top of the wall, turns outwards and opens as a square hole in the gable. The roof is straw thatch, laid on over "scraws" of grass turf, and held down by a net-work of sougans (straw ropes), to the ends of which heavy stones or long pieces of timber are attached. The gable of the house is stepped, so that the thatch when laid on does not project over the end wall, and is sealed down, to prevent water getting under it at this part, by a plastering of clay.[1] The thatch is put on fresh every year, a new layer being laid over the older ones, until the lowermost layer is thoroughly saturated with smoke, and quite rotten, when the whole is stripped off and used as manure. The floor is of beaten clay in the kitchen, but the bedrooms are sometimes boarded. The most expensive material used in building a house is wood, which is very scarce, and is usually obtained from drift wood, washed up after a storm, in which way large beams often reach the islands. It is owing to this scarcity of material, and the people having to build their own houses, that there are so few outbuildings or cattle-sheds, and that the dwelling-houses are so small. The furniture is scanty, and testifies to the poverty of the people. A few

[1] "Houses thatched in this manner are called on the west coast *tighthe cruithte*, i. e. 'shaken houses,' in contrast to the *tighthe fuaighte* 'stitched houses,' in which the thatch is tied on by ropes or cords."—REV. E. O'GROWNEY.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

415 though it may be put to the less innocent purpose of preparing malt for poteen, and a spinning-wheel of the usual type. For light at night
373 modern lamps are coming into use, but in many houses the "flare" is used. It consists of a rude sconce, in which is fastened a cylindrical reservoir for oil, closed at the top by a lid, and having a spout like that of a coffee-pot, through which the wick is drawn. Rush lights are still used by some.

342 The house is often whitewashed outside; the roof is thatch, of straw in most localities, but on the islands, and some places in the peninsula, bent is use instead. This is laid on over "scraws" of grass-turf and fastened down by sougans (straw ropes), the ends of which may be attached to pegs driven into the walls, or have long pieces of
● [284] wood or heavy stones fastened to them. These ropes are often arranged in a net work so as to hold the thatch more securely. Coir rope, bought in Belmullet, is now used by some instead of sougans. The gable is stepped or cut away so that the thatch does not project over the end wall.

There are several other types of houses, though the style just described is the most common. Most of the newer houses and those building have chimneys, pig-styes of turf or stone, and in some cases byres. Few of the old one-roomed dwellings, built partly or altogether of turf, are still to be seen, but there are a number of one-roomed huts of stone, many of which have no windows.

The most primitive habitations in the district, and perhaps in Ireland, are the rude huts (*boolies*) on Inishglora, inhabited during the lobster fishing season by the men of Inishkea; they are about a dozen in number, rudely built of dry stone and thatched with "scraws." There is not room to stand upright in them, the height from floor to roof being about 5 feet. Internally they contain a rude bunk filled with straw for sleeping in and a few large stones to sit upon. Cooking appears to be done out of doors. Successive batches of men live in these huts for about three months of the year. Some of the poorest houses on the mainland are in the isolated and primitive village of Fallmore, where few of the dwellings have windows and few or none chimneys. The houses on the islands are decidedly among the best in the district. Many are whitewashed inside, and the furniture is of a superior class, abundant material being thrown up as drift wood. The beds are four-posted structures, with flat board tops, and some of them have bright-coloured curtains, and the bedding is clean and tidy-looking.

489 6. *Transport.*—Lying as it does far from towns of any size, and separated from the nearest by a wide stretch of wild and thinly-

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 designed for temporary habitations, for it results, after repeated additions of straw and mud, in an extremely thick and heavy 177 roof. Yet its distribution on the east coast seems to point to introduction from overseas, and in Co. Down it is known as English thatch. One would like to know more about old thatching techniques in other parts of north-western Europe. In Galway a house with mud-sealed thatch is known as a 'shaken house'.[1]

342 Another way of securing the thatch, which has a limited distribution chiefly along the Antrim coast, we may term the [283] pegged method. Horizontal two-ply ropes made of sally, heather, or the tough fibres of bog-fir roots are laid along the roof parallel to the eaves at intervals of a foot or so and pegged to the scraw with wooden pins which are pushed in upwards so as not to lead water through the roof. A row of scraws is pegged to the rather sharp ridge (Fig. 9, 4). I have observed this style of thatch in south-west Lancashire. Much more widely distributed is the thatch which is found along the north and west coasts from east Ulster round to Kerry, but comes into its own particularly in Donegal, where it gives some of the most attractive roofs in north-western Europe. In Donegal they are rounded at the ridge to throw off the winds, the supporting couples being designed to this end with short cross-pieces breaking the angle of the ridge (Fig. 10). In some [284] districts the ropes, formerly of twisted straw or bog fir but now generally ready-made of sisal, run in both directions to make a complete network; in others the horizontal ropes are omitted because of the obstructing gable-ends which, rising above the thatch, protect it from the winds. The ropes are secured to the walls by means of a row of stone-pegs below each eave. This method of tying is found also in north Mayo, most typically in areas known to have been settled from Donegal in the seventeenth century.[2] Here the horizontal ropes are carried over the gable in steps left for the purpose (Fig. 12, 2). Such roofs are said to be 'stitched': a close mesh may require up to a mile's length of roping. The older method of securing the ropes, from Mayo to Kerry, is to fasten the ends to small boulders

[1] C. R. Browne, *Inishbofin and Inishshark*. [Text continues on p. 54]
[2] C. R. Browne, *Ballycroy*.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

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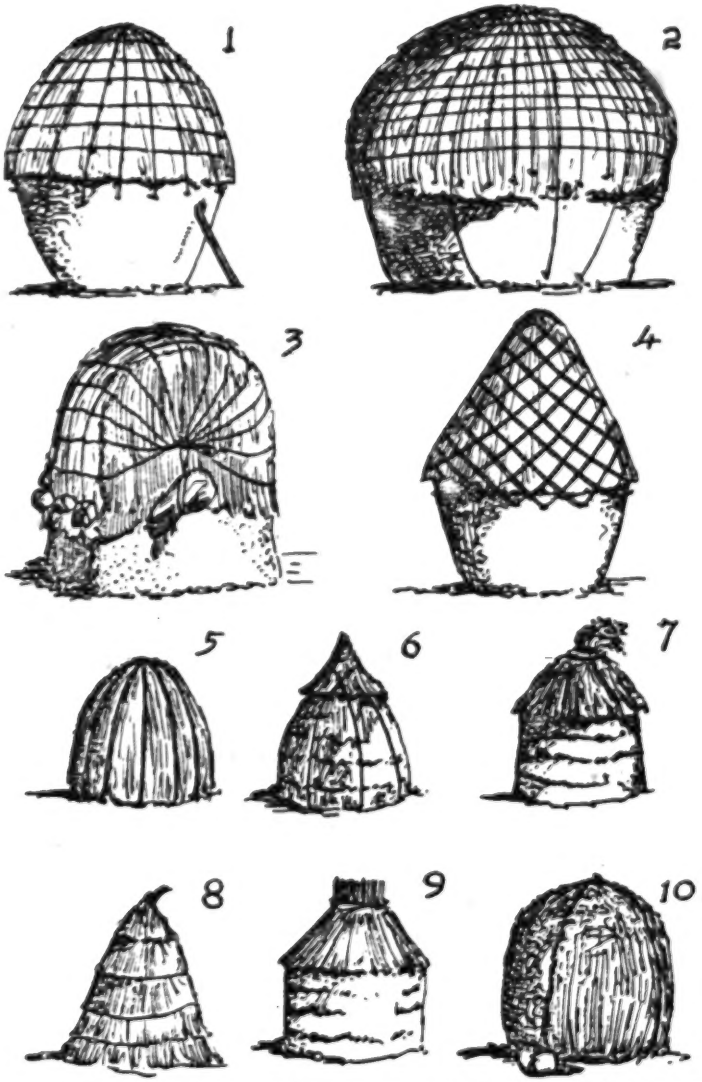

FIG. 52. Stacks and huts roped in many patterns. (1) Cavan (flax). (2) Cork (hay). (3) Mayo (hay). (4) Antrim (oats). (5) Donegal (hay). (6) Donegal (oats). (7) Down (oats). (8) Down (seed hay). (9) Cavan (oats). (10) Down (tramp-cock of hay).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

time large-scale hay-making developed it had to fit into a fixed rota of farm work which kept men busy in late July and August at flax-pulling and turf-carrying, so that the cocked hay had to wait. Today the baling machine is speeding up the process, but the bales, whether from the need of seasoning or from force of habit, are left piled in angular cocks scattered over the hayfield.

Carried at last to the haggard on rick-shifters or slipes—formerly on slide-cars or the backs of men and ponies—the hay is built into small circular stacks (pikes). As a protection against wind and rain they are thatched with rushes forthwith and roped (Fig. 52). Since the stacks are thatched before they have had time to settle, the pegged or scolloped thatch found in England is not used. Not only do ropes hold the thatch more securely but it is a simple matter to tighten them as the stack sinks. In the simplest form of roping, hanging stones are attached to the rope ends so that the adjustment is automatic. But where the roof of the stack is not rounded but conical a straw-rope is wrapped round in a spiral which can later be tightened by vertical ropes pegged into the lower part of the stack. One sees this spiral roping also in parts of western Britain. Several other patterns of roping are found, some making a complete network; and the shape of the stack also shows many regional variations (Fig. 52). The size and shape depend not only on local custom but to some extent on the weather and the condition of the hay. Small rounded stacks are most usual, for they are wind-resistant. They are characteristic too of much of Highland Britain from Caithness to Cornwall.

The scythe has not entirely given way to the mowing machine on small farms in whose tiny fields it would anyhow be difficult to turn a machine. The Irish scythesmen, though not so well known as the spalpeens or reapers, had their brief day in the English harvest-fields, and those who remember working 'across the water' in the nineteenth century tell of great feats of piecework. I was told of one heroic figure who could scythe seven acres in the day, 'and four lifters wouldn't lift after him'. Henry Stephens, in 1855, reckoned that the English labourer would scythe four acres of oats or barley in a ten-hour working day.[1]

[1]Quoted in E. C. Curwen, *Plough and Pasture* (1946), 98.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

HARVEST

When the scythe was transferred from the mowing of hay to the cutting of corn during the second half of last century there was much opposition from the reapers, sometimes for the good reason that little fields full of great boulders or the stumps of bog-fir gave no space to swing a scythe, and a single blow on the fast-moving point may ruin the blade. But one suspects that conservatism was rooted in magic. It is said that the rice-growers of Malaya refuse to use a scythe because its slashing motion would frighten away the spirits of the rice. Some such notion may have strengthened the Irishman's condemnation of the scythe. And I find another curious parallel with the Far East. The Malayan reaper hums like an insect while he is cutting the rice, perhaps to soothe the spirits of the living crop. In Ireland there is an old belief that an insect kept in a little box fastened to the handle of hook or scythe will bring luck and give the blade greater cutting power. Both scythe and sickle are personal possessions and their luck is personal: they are loaned with reluctance. When a sickle is borrowed it should not be passed directly from hand to hand but thrown on the ground and then picked up. This belief, which applies to all pointed objects, may be explained by the danger of handling a sharp tool, for bad luck is often related to bad practice.

But before coming to corn harvest the handling of flax should be described. Unpleasant handling it is, even if not quite so onerous (and odorous) as working with hemp or jute. When grown for fibre flax is harvested after the pale blue flowers have fallen but before the seed ripens, and because it is the stalk that is being harvested it is not cut but pulled up by the roots. 'Lint' is a crop of the small family farm, for many hands are required, teams or 'boons' of anything from half a dozen to thirty people gathering from neighbouring farms and working together in a festival spirit which reaches its climax in the evening dance. The tough flax is hard on the hands and the stooping is back-breaking. But the beets (sheaves) are carefully put together, for they have to be spread after retting and the stalks should lie evenly. The three handfuls which compose the beet are laid down at slightly different angles so that they will separate easily. A standard beet is reckoned to be 22 inches in diameter. The bands (ties) are prepared beforehand and consist

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

248 [284] of two lengths of green rushes knotted at the flowering end. When tied, the end of the band is thrust under towards the head of the beet, that is 'with the grain' of the flax. The beets are carried as soon as possible to be steeped (drowned or dubbed) in the flax dam or 'lint hole' where soft peaty water has been standing for some days to warm up. If they cannot be steeped forthwith the beets are built into stooks, for they are damaged if left lying on the ground. The beets are placed upright in the dam, with a slight inclination to facilitate their later removal, and when well packed may be covered, if the water is deep enough, with a horizontal layer or 'sheeting row' on which large boulders are placed to keep the flax under water. The process of retting (rotting) takes from seven to twelve days and is soon advertised by a foul and penetrating odour as the core or 'bone' of the stalk decays. Then the slimy, stinking beets are taken out of the dam and 'grassed', that is spread on grass, usually a new-mown hayfield. This is a skilled but dirty (Pl. 5, 2) job. To ensure that the stalks do not stick together the beets are shaken loose over the left forearm so that the flax lies evenly in ordered rows. After a couple of days it is once more tied into beets, but if the weather is bad it is first 'gaited' for a day or so to complete the drying (Fig. 51). This provides one of the more picturesque scenes of flax harvest, for the gaits look like the skirts of invisible dancers or the tents of a fairy host. The drying stalks of each beet are gathered and spread around the leg to make a hollow broad-based cone which will stand upright. It seems probable that gaiting was at one time a method of drying cereal crops as well as flax in these difficult Highland regions. The 'gaitner' was a recognized member of the harvest gang in Northumberland in the early nineteenth century. 'He follows close on the reapers and, the corn being laid in the band near the tops of the corn, he . . . brings the sheaf up to the left knee, gives the band a peculiar twist and sets the sheaf upright, giving it a half turn so that the skirts fly out to look like the cover of a beehive'.[1] Gaited corn was said to 'win' well and it was carried to the stack without stooking.

Ideally the flax after gaiting is ready for breaking and scutching, and in the old days when the farmer was also a

[1] *Loudon's Encyclopædia of Agriculture* (1831).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Armagh

PLATE 13

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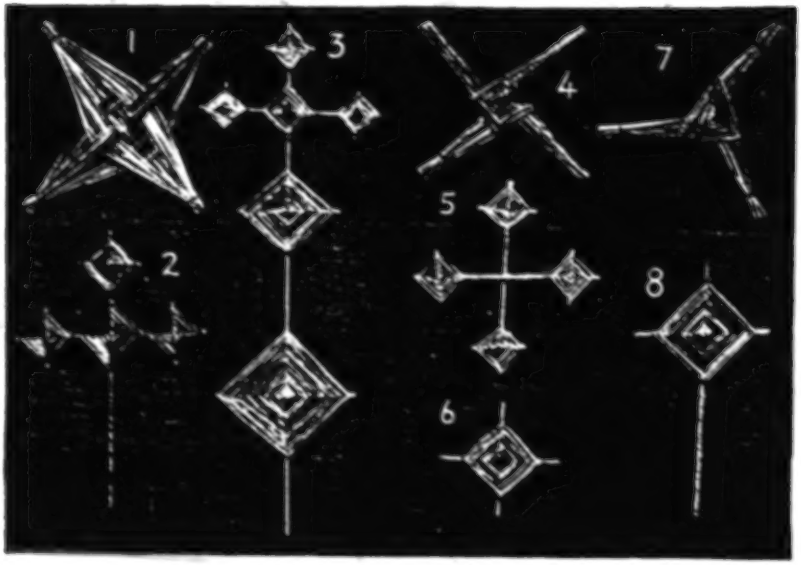
284

1. Harvest knots, Co. Armagh.



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301

2. Bridget's Crosses, Co. Armagh.

[facing p. 191]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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283 of these rope-making materials had other uses as well, not forgetting their functions in ceremony and magic as represented by Briget's crosses, harvest knots, the blaeberry baskets of Lammas and the rush ladders of Hallowe'en. Better known, [373] though no longer made, are the rushlights whose feeble glow, in the words of Gilbert White, made 'darkness visible'.

[284] [285]

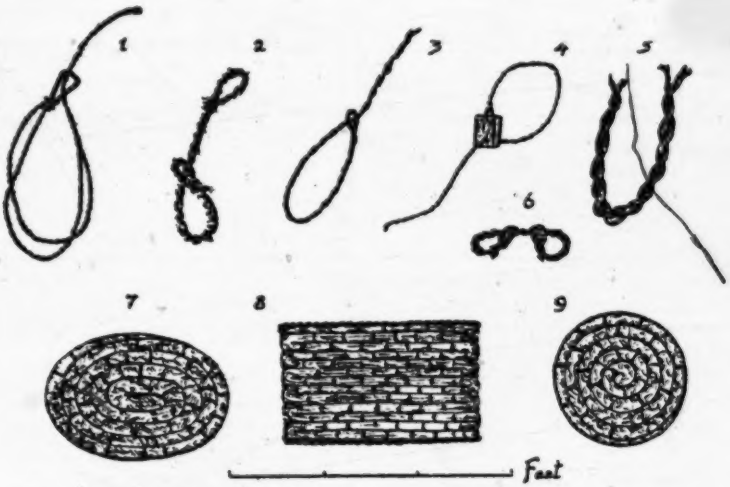

FIG. 68. Ropes and mats. (1) Rush burden rope, Co. Donegal. (2) Tie of cow-hair, Co. Kerry. (3) Willow bark burden rope, Co. Roscommon. (4) Grass burden rope, Aran Islands. (5) Tie of fir-rope, from roof, Co. Down. (6) Sheep's langle of oat straw, Co. Down. (7) Plaited mat of marram grass, Co. Wexford. (8) Coiled mat of rye straw, Aran Islands. (9) Coiled mat of oat straw, Co. Donegal.

283 482 Examples of ropes and mats of various kinds are shown in Fig. 68. The burden ropes, carefully made in two or three ply, enabled quite heavy loads to be carried from inaccessible places. A correspondent in Co. Cork has sent me the following account of one method of lifting the burden, in this case of furze (gorse, whin) which was harvested both for bedding and for fodder. 'Passing his rope round the bundle, the carrier would throw himself on his back on top of the bundle, kick his heels in the air and jerk himself to the vertical, walking away completely concealed beneath a moving mountain of furze.' Where tracks

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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as the work of specialists (Fig. 71). The pampooties of the Aran Islands deserve mention here. Made of calfskin, but formerly of sealskin,[1] these one-piece shoes were once doubtless widely worn and have kept their hold in Aran because of their suitability for wet rocks and frail curraghs. The rivlins of Scotland and the Highland *bròganan* were very similar and I have seen rawhide shoes of the same type from Norway and the Pyrenees. They all have the hair outside and are secured by lacing back and front.

The wight serves both to hold corn, in filling a sack for instance, and to convey peats from the stack to the fireside: perforated it becomes a meal-sieve (boran) for sifting the skins (seeds) from oatmeal, or a buttermilk sieve for taking out the last grains of butter from the churn. The winnowing tray or dallan is a larger version, and it, too, may be perforated to allow the wind to pass through as the corn is shaken out on to a spread cloth. There are, up and down Ireland, many bold windy Shilling Hills where the 'shellings' (husks) were, in past times, separated from the grain in this way (Pl. 7).

This brings us to the flail and its 'hanging' (the mid-kipple, hooden, gad, middling, or tug) which was commonly a thong of cow-, horse-, sheep, or goat-skin, though sometimes of rabbit- or eel-skin or a cord of flax. The flail, the proverbial 'stick-and-a-half', consists of a three to four feet long helve or hand-staff, usually made of ash, and a shorter beater, swingle or souple of hazel or holly. There are two principal methods of 'hanging' the parts together. In one variety, the tie passes through two leather caps lashed over the ends (Fig. 72, 1). This appears to be a variant of the common English flail-hanging, where, however, the cap is made of steamed ash or yew and there is no linking piece. Its distribution in Ireland, down the east coast, points to derivation from England. Modifications, occurring as far west as Donegal (Fig. 72, 1*a*, *b*), have the linking thong passing through a hole made either in the helve or in the beater. Kevin Danaher states that the capped flail is characteristic of central Europe: it is believed to have first appeared in north France in the early Middle Ages.[2] The

[1] O'Flaherty, *H'Ier Connaught*, 59 (footnote).
[2] *J.C.H. and A. Soc.*, 60 (1955), 6–14.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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412 other method of hanging has a somewhat peripheral distribu-
171 tion in Europe (Scandinavia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Switzerland,
the Pyrenees) and also in Ireland, and as its simplicity as well
●284 as its distribution suggest, it is the older type. The tie passes around grooves cut in both hand-staff and souple (Fig. 72, 2) though again there are variants, one end of the tie, for example, being passed through a hole (Fig. 72, 2*a*). The grooved hanging, it is claimed by its users, is superior to the capped because the join is almost universal and there is no need to turn the halve in the hand when flailing. The holed fastening may be the most ancient method of all: it is found in parts of Atlantic Europe and the Baltic lands, but in Ireland is apparently restricted to Ulster (Pl. 6, 2).

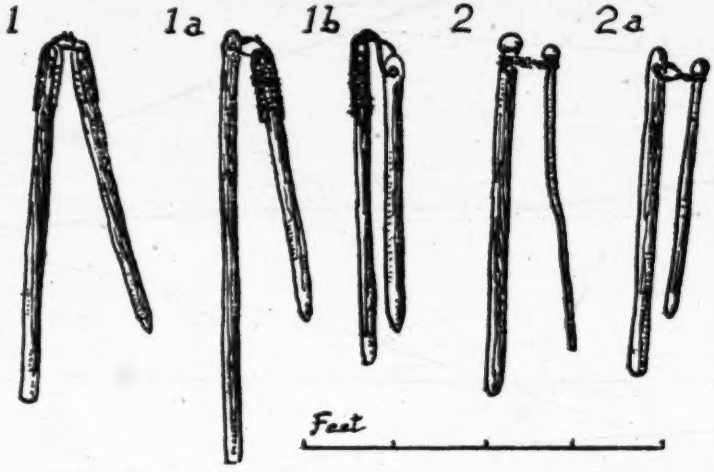

FIG. 72. Flails. (1) Co. Meath. (1*a*) Co. Armagh. (1*b*) Co. Donegal. (2) Co. Cavan. (2*a*) Co. Antrim.

243 Ancient and rudimentary as the flail is, requiring for its
412 making no tool save a sharp knife, there are some thrashers
171 who dispense with it, 'scutching' the corn instead with a stick or 'lashing' it over a barrel, a stone or a board (Plate 4). Many a small farmer in the north of Ireland harvests his seed grass in this way. The scutching method is used also in the